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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's prayer will be offered by our guest Chaplain, Rev. Charles V. Antonicelli, St. Joseph's Church on Capitol Hill, Washington, DC.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Lord God of power and might, we praise You this day for the life You have given us.

In these difficult days we ask for Your guidance and protection, dear Lord. In a special way, we ask You to protect the men and women of our Armed Forces. Keep them safe from harm and return them to us safely.

In the words of Psalm 40 we pray, "Lord, graciously rescue me! Come quickly to help me, Lord! Put to shame and confound all who seek to take my life. Turn back in disgrace those who desire my ruin. But may all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You."

Heavenly Father, we ask Your blessing on the women and men of this Senate as they are called upon to make difficult decisions which affect many lives. Grant them Your wisdom and compassion.

We ask this in Your holy name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 20, 2003.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, section 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Mr. JOHN E. SUNUNU thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, the Senate will resume consideration of S. Con. Res. 23, the concurrent budget resolution this morning, with a total of 14½ hours left for debate on the resolution, 6½ hours remaining under the control of the chairman of the Budget Committee and 8 hours remaining under the control of the ranking member.

In view of the military action taking place in Iraq, the Senate will consider today a resolution of support for President Bush and the troops. The final wording on the resolution itself is being worked out by Members on both sides of the aisle.

I had an opportunity to talk to the majority leader a few minutes ago and we discussed the wording of the resolution. By late this morning or early afternoon the specific wording will be worked out.

I envision sufficient time for Senators to speak. A number of Senators have expressed their desire to speak in support of our troops, and we will accommodate that. Senators will be advised as to the time for this discussion

and debate as well as when the vote on the resolution of support will take place later this morning or early afternoon after we have had a time for Members on both sides of the aisle to discuss the appropriate timing for that.

Both today and tomorrow will be very busy. We will complete action on the budget resolution this week. In order to provide adequate time for people to both express their support and at the same time finish the budget resolution this week, we will be in very late tonight, and I would assume tomorrow, and late tomorrow night, and possibly go into Saturday. Again, we will finish the budget resolution this week.

There are currently three amendments pending: The Kyl amendment regarding the estate tax, the Durbin amendment regarding a prescription drug benefit, and the Rockefeller and Collins amendment regarding aid to States. Under the previous order, the votes on these amendments will be stacked to occur at 4 o'clock today. Those votes will be the first votes today. There may be other votes stacked as well depending on what amendments are offered over the course of the morning.

We were here late last tonight. Again, I make the appeal that people file their amendments and talk to the chairman and ranking member, the managers of this important piece of legislation, so we can progress within the time elements that have been laid out, the 14½ hours remaining for debate on the resolution.

Mr. NICKLES. Will the majority leader yield?

Mr. FRIST. Yes, indeed.

Mr. NICKLES. I concur with what the leader said and also with my colleagues both from Nevada and North Dakota. I encourage colleagues if they do have amendments to please share those with us. We have three amendments in the queue. We are happy to look at amendments. We may be able

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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to accept some amendments. We may want some modifications and may want to have some substitutes. However, I would like to avoid, if possible, the vote-arama. I don't think it makes the Senate look very good. There are 14½ hours remaining on the resolution. I would like people to have a chance to be able to debate their amendment. Even so, I encourage Senators, if they have amendments, let us look at them before they send their amendments to the desk. We want to be able to look at those amendments on both sides. I encourage colleagues on this side, if they have amendments, the Senator from North Dakota is entitled to look at those amendments. But they can have a chance to debate those amendments, have some debate time throughout the day. I expect we will have a lot of votes today and a lot of votes tomorrow. Colleagues should be aware. Also, they should be prepared, if necessary, to stay on Saturday for a lot of votes. I hope and expect we could conclude either very late tonight or sometime tomorrow but, if necessary, on Saturday.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I say to the majority leader, I think it is inappropriate to proceed with business as usual when a war has begun. That sends the wrong message to the country. It is not what the Senate should be doing.

I am the ranking member of the Budget Committee and I would very much, just as the chairman, like to complete work on the budget resolution quickly. But I have to say that I don't think that is the priority at this moment. At this moment, I think the Senate ought to be talking about events that are unfolding half the world away that have our young men and women at risk and that have us engaged in a military conflict that is enormously consequential to the fight of this Nation.

I understand the resolution is not yet ready. So I think for some time this morning we could be on the schedule we agreed to last night. But I think after that time, to just proceed with debating the budget and talking about pay-go and talking about this amendment and that amendment is going to look awfully strange to the American people when our troops are engaged in battle.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, we do have a challenge but we have a challenge to pay appropriate respect for our troops and that is the purpose of having a resolution, which is a joint resolution, for which I pray and hope we have 100-percent support.

During debate on that resolution, I want to give everyone the opportunity to express that support, although I will also say whatever happens over the next several days, and it is likely to go on through next week, there will be ample opportunity, I believe—and I will make ample opportunity over the ensuing weeks—for people to express support.

We have a challenge now that we will finish the budget resolution this week. So we have the budget resolution and we will have this resolution of support and we will be able to do both. I think the budget is very important—how all taxpayer dollars are spent for military, for defense, for homeland security, for education, for health care. That is our responsibility. We have people listening right now, people are at work, working in convenience stores, they are working in banks, they are showing up for work, and there are reporters outside. The Nation's business must keep going.

Our responsibility as Senators is to develop a budget that gives some priorities. We have done a good job to date. To walk away from that responsibility at this point is simply irresponsible. That is why, as majority leader, I say we are going to stay here and we are going to do the Nation's business. That is our responsibility and you will see that fulfilled. We do have the challenge of being able to do both.

I look forward to working with the minority leader and the managers of this particular bill to be able to accomplish that. I am confident we will be able to do that. We have been working on the resolution in support of our troops for several days with the minority leader's staff. We have made real progress. It expresses strong support, I believe, and the sense of this body. We will look forward, hopefully this afternoon, to bringing that to the floor and being able to give that opportunity for people to speak.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET FOR THE U.S. GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2004

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of S. Con. Res. 23, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 23) setting forth the congressional budget for the U.S. Government for fiscal year 2004 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal year 2003 and for fiscal years 2005 through 2013.

Pending:

Kyl modified amendment No. 288, to provide financial security to family farm and small business owners by ending the unfair practice of taxing someone at death.

Dorgan amendment No. 294, to provide a meaningful prescription drug benefit in Medicare that is available to all beneficiaries.

Rockefeller amendment No. 275, to express the sense of the Senate concerning State fiscal relief.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I would like the attention of the majority lead-

er, if I could, before he leaves the floor, to say to him nobody is suggesting we walk away from our responsibility to do the budget. But the fact is, that does not have to be done today or tomorrow. We have plenty of time before the budget deadline is reached. That is not until the middle of April.

When we talk about responsibility here, we have no higher responsibility than the defense of this Nation. I tell you, the thing that is on the minds of my constituents, the thing that is on the minds of virtually every American, is not the budget resolution. The thing that is on the minds of the American people today is the fact that we have a quarter of a million troops engaged in a battle that is incredibly consequential to this Nation. I wish to register my strong disagreement with business as usual in the Senate when we are at war.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, let me respond and say there is a difference, I believe, in that I believe we express strong support for our troops, for our Commander in Chief especially; that we can do that and at the same time carry on our responsibility. It is a difference in approach. I guess that is why the last Congress, under other leadership, failed to pass a budget. Look where it got us—where the first 40 days of this particular Congress, we had to clean up a process which was left because of that same prioritization, that a budget is not important. We believe that a budget is important, that it prioritizes the needs of defense, of health care, of education. Thus, under this leadership, we are going to proceed with the budget. We are going to pass that budget resolution. We are not going to delay. Now I am beginning to sense a little bit that we want to delay the budget, put it off a week, a month, a year, or maybe into the next Congress. It is simply not going to happen. We are going to proceed. We have 14½ hours on this budget. We are not going to pay respect to the fact that some people say the budget is just not important now. We believe that budget is important.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, there is no suggestion from this Senator that the budget is not important. I believe it is critically important. Harking back to last year has no relevance to this moment. We are at war, and to spend time in the Senate today on something other than that strikes me as wholly inappropriate.

We are not talking about not getting to the budget. Nobody wants a budget resolution, I think, any more than this Senator. I have spent my entire career in the Senate on the Budget Committee. I want a budget resolution. We are at war and here we are talking about pay-go.

Virtually every American is rivetted on what is happening to this Nation on